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Small Ma Meetin

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Moody Gardens' many modes

■ An aquarium, a rain forest and gardens make Galveston resort more than a meeting destination. See page 14.

Partnerships pull us through tough times, futurist says

Partnerships will help businesses pull through these times "of challenge and change," futurist Jim Carroll told meeting planners and suppliers who gathered in Cincinnati in early March for the MPI MidAmerica Education Conference.

Carroll, a trends consultant who has written 34 books and more than 600 articles, was a keynote speaker at the two-day conference that brought together meeting planners and suppliers from Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio and Tennessee.

Carroll pointed out that though the world and the meetings industry have been altered by the events of Sept. 11, 2001, not all of the changes predicted at the time have come to past. Among them was the belief that meetings would go virtual. The need for human

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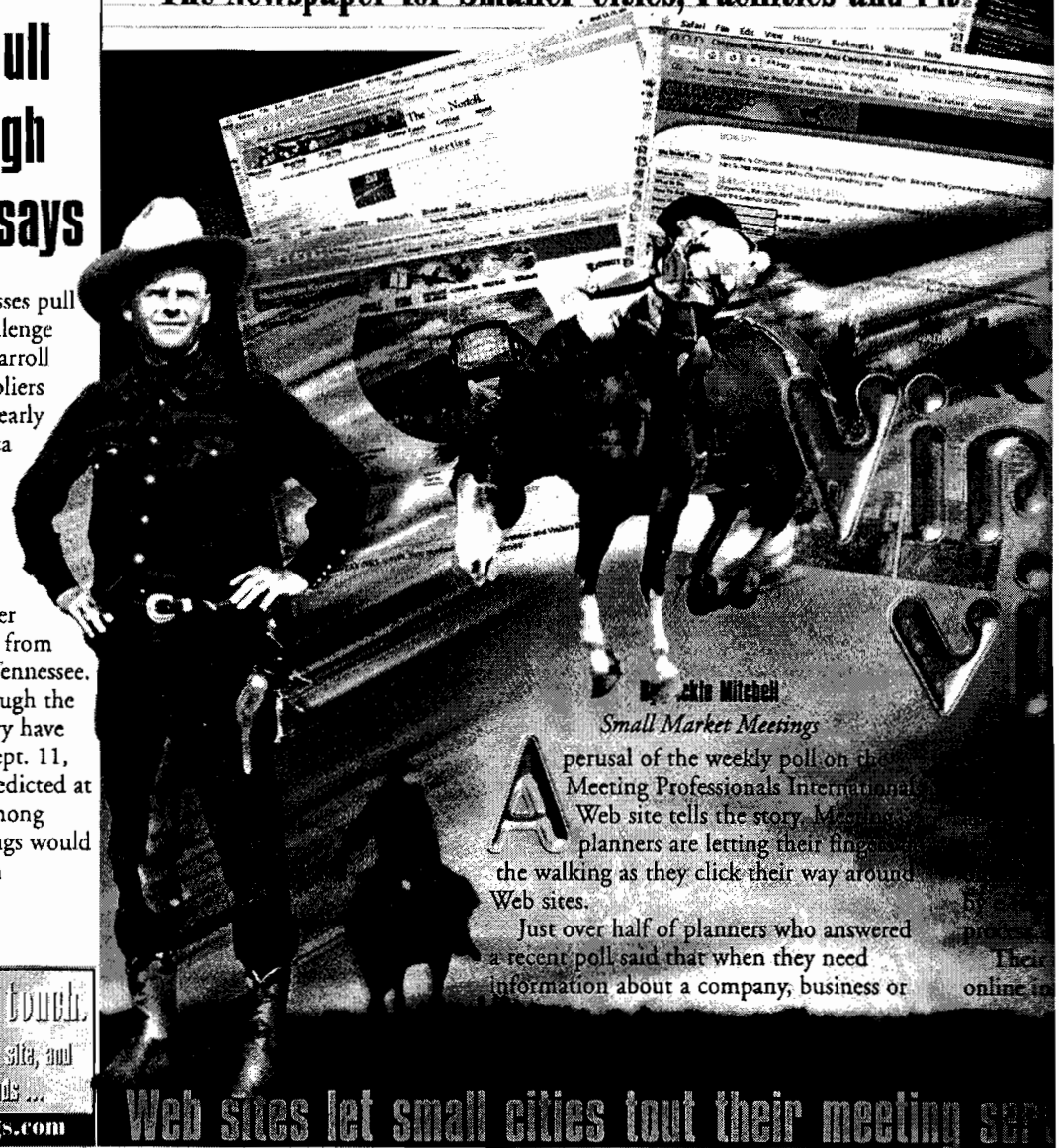

Web sites let small cities tout their meeting ser

By Julie Mitchell
Small Market Meetings

A perusal of the weekly poll on the Meeting Professionals International Web site tells the story. Meeting planners are letting their fingers do the walking as they click their way around Web sites.

Just over half of planners who answered a recent poll said that when they need information about a company, business or

Cut loose with some

A Pioneer Publication

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Change churns need for more meetings

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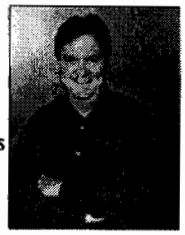
connection persevered, he said.

"It's important to bring people together regardless of their function, whether it be sales, education, finance," said Carroll. "At the end of the day, it's even more important to walk out of a the meeting together, have a drink and network."

At the same time, unease about world unrest has put business in an "idea rut," Carroll said. Businesses are spinning their wheels, and innovation seems stalled. This has led to what Carroll terms "aggressive indecision" — decisions deferred until the last possible moment.

Delayed decisions make contingencies critical. Successful meeting planners have learned that they must, on short notice, come up with several alternatives that not only are doable but that will meet their clients' needs and expectations. Solutions must also be customized.



Jim Carroll

"That's what the business world demands," Carroll said.

Carroll preached a sermon that meeting planners have been hearing for the past several years. Meeting planners must go strategic, he said, and deliver provable return on investment from events. To do so, they must have a handle on the business problems that need to be solved.

Worker exodus leads to increase in meetings

The vast amount of information and knowledge that workers are being asked to absorb, coupled with an exodus of long-time workers, will lead to an increase in meetings that focus on professional education and strategic direction, Carroll predicted.

Today, 25 percent of employees are considered knowledge workers, compared with 14 percent just 30 years ago. Knowledge workers are those who must access, analyze and understand information in order to do their jobs. Training will be needed for the many people who feel ill equipped to cope with becoming a knowledge worker.

Upcoming retirements mean that a great deal of corporate knowledge is simply going to "walk out the door," Carroll said. Knowledge retention and transfer will fuel many meeting and will be key drivers for many association events.

Despite the many new forms of communication we can use and the speed at which we can connect to others, "we feel disconnected, miss out on any passion and can lose focus by being out of touch," said Carroll.

That has led to an even greater need to bring people together, both in business and casual settings.

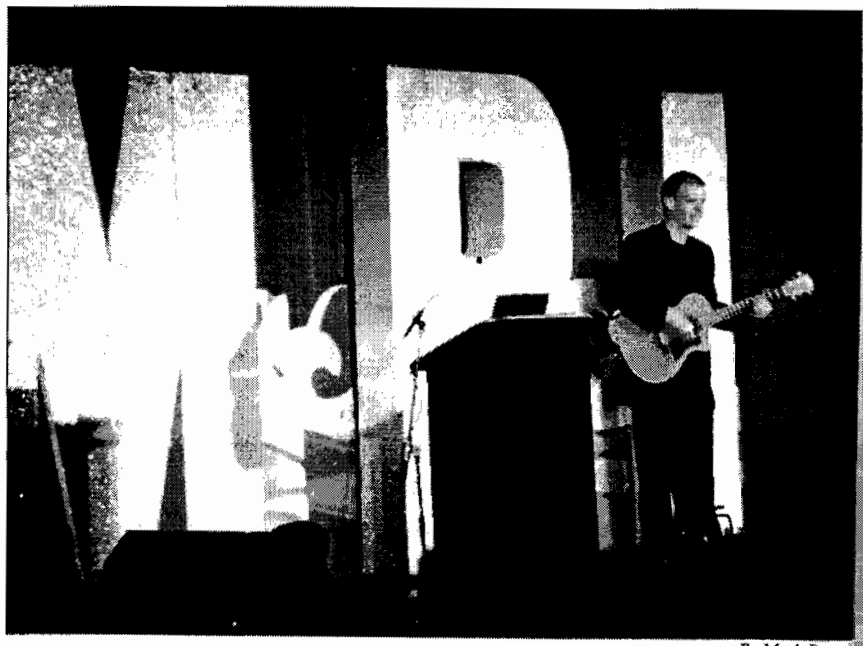
"There's an even greater need than ever to bring people together, to create and share the passion and build relationships," Carroll said.

Other speakers included Mike Hamilton, who drew on 25 years of event experience in "Supercharging Your Trade Show Experience"; Joan Eisenstodt, founder of meeting management and consultant company Eisenstodt Associates, who discussed ethics in a morning general session and risk management and contingency planning in a breakout session; and Mike Rayburn, known as the world's funniest guitar virtuoso, who used music and song to inspire his audience to break through limitations.

MPI president Colin Rorrie Jr. and MPI board chairman Theresa "Terri" Breining also addressed the group during the opening session and luncheon.

By Mark Records

A caricature artist whipped up portraits of meeting planners at a trade show booth.



By Mark Records

Singing and strumming, Mike Rayburn lived up to his billing as "the world's funniest guitar virtuoso." He entertained meeting planners of MPI chapters from four states.